DR. HALLIFAX's

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

HONOURABLE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON

MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 1769.

Martis, 31° *die Januarii*, 1769.

ORDERED,

That the Thanks of this Houſe be given to the Reverend Doctor *Halliſax* for the Sermon by him preached before this Houſe yeſterday, at St. Margaret's, Weſtminſter, and that he be deſired to print the ſame, and that Mr. *Montagu* and Mr. *Cuſt* do acquaint him therewith.

J. HATSELL,
Cl. Dom. Com.

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A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

HONOURABLE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

AT

ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER,

ON

MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 1769;

APPOINTED TO BE OBSERVED AS THE

MARTYRDOM OF KING CHARLES I.

694.i.18
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BY SAMUEL HALLIFAX, LL.D.
FELLOW OF TRINITY HALL,
AND
ARABIC PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

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M.DCC.LXIX.

GALATIANS V. 13.

BRETHREN, YE HAVE BEEN CALLED UNTO LIBERTY; ONLY USE NOT LIBERTY FOR AN OCCASION TO THE FLESH, BUT BY LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER.

THE word Liberty, in the writings of St. Paul, very frequently means nothing more than freedom from the bondage of the Moſaic law; in contradiſtinction to which, the goſpel is called *the Law of Liberty*, and Chriſtians are ſaid to be vindicated into *the glorious Liberty of the children of God.** In another ſenſe it denotes that Moral Freedom, which conſiſts in an exemption from the illuſions of vice and error; as where our Saviour tells the Jews, if they *continued in his word*, they ſhould *know the truth, and the truth ſhould make them Free.*† In one of the epiſtles of St. Peter, it ſeems uſed to expreſs that Political Liberty, which

* Rom. viii. 21.

† John viii. 31, 32.

which good ſubjects enjoy under civil government: *Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake: — as free, and not uſing your Liberty for a cloke of maliciouſneſs, but as the ſervants of God.*‡ And laſtly it may, by parity of reaſoning, be underſtood of Religious Liberty in general, as well as that particular ſpecies of it, which is oppoſed to the ſlavery of the ceremonial law. Though the Chriſtian religion does not expreſſly intermeddle with queſtions of a political nature, and never lends the authority of its ſanctions to encourage a ſpirit of rebellion or diſaffection to any of the eſtabliſhed forms of government; yet as, in its tendency, it is calculated to oppoſe the pretenſions of deſpotic power, as its genius is favourable to Civil no leſs than Religious Freedom, it may with propriety be affirmed in this as well as other ſenſes of the word, that we *have been called unto liberty* by the goſpel: and the caution which the Apoſtle ſubjoins, *not to uſe* our *liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh*, or force it to miniſter to the purpoſes of ſenſuality and licentiouſneſs, may fairly be extended to every one of its ſignifications, and is with equal juſtice applicable to them all.

BUT in oppoſition to this enlarged acceptation of Liberty in the new teſtament, we have been told that "Chriſtianity

" and

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 13. 16.

"and Civil Freedom are incompatible with each other; and "that a ſtate, which ſhould haply be compoſed of real "Chriſtians, could not ſubſiſt." Among the many paradoxes, by which the writings of Bayle are ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed, this is one; in which, however, he has had the fortune to be followed and outdone by a celebrated author of the preſent times, from whom we learn, that "True Chriſtians are made to be Slaves, that their religion "preaches only Servitude and Dependence, that its ſpirit is "favourable to Tyranny, and that a Chriſtian Republic "is a contradiction in the very terms." * And thus it has happened, that while one ſet of unbelievers have laboured to deſtroy all comfortable hopes of happineſs in another life, a ſecond ſort have made it their buſineſs to defraud us of every reaſonable enjoyment in this.

THE objection now mentioned is ſupported on the following principle; that Chriſtianity from its nature ſo attaches its converts to an heavenly country, as to render them indifferent about the intereſts of an earthly one. And where the competition is between the temporary advantages to be procured in this life, and that eternal felicity which is to take place in the next, where the fugitive and unſatisfying

* *Rouſſeau.*

fying pleaſures of the world are contraſted with the pure and permanent enjoyments of heaven; there is ſobriety as well as ſenſe in determining, as the goſpel does, which ought in reaſon to have the preference. Further than this the goſpel does not go; and inſtead of diſſuading us from a rational regard to our country and to mankind, it ſtrenuouſly inculcates all thoſe virtues, by which the good of both may be moſt effectually promoted. It recommends that Juſtice, which is the foundation of public no leſs than private ſecurity; and that Moderation in the purſuit and uſe of worldly enjoyments, which is the ſureſt barrier againſt irregularity and exceſs. It enjoins Benevolence, in the trueſt ſenſe; not that narrow and contracted benevolence, which is confined within the circle of friends or relatives, and is often grounded on humour and caprice; but that enlarged and god-like diſpoſition, which takes in an univerſal intereſt, which excludes all little and ſelfiſh views, and forms that nobleſt and moſt illuſtrious of characters, the Friend of Man. A ſtate, whoſe members lived and acted under the influence of ſuch principles — and they are the principles of genuine Chriſtianity — muſt, morally ſpeaking, quickly become ſuperior to all others: the more the citizens of ſuch a community were ſuſceptible of the im-

impreſſions of religion, the greater ſenſibility they would have of the duties, which are owing to their country: envy and ambition, treachery and injuſtice, with the other vices which deſolate human ſociety, and level with the ground the proud and towering fabrics of ſtates and kingdoms, would vaniſh and diſappear: in the language of the prophet, *the people would be all righteous, and inherit the land for ever: Violence would no more be heard in the land, waſting nor deſtruction within their borders; but they ſhould call their walls Salvation, and their gates Praiſe.**

If the aſſertion mentioned above, that a ſtate compoſed of true Chriſtians could not ſubſiſt, be thus deſtitute of any firm foundation; the other part of the objection, which maintains that Chriſtianity preaches only Servitude and Dependence, and that its ſpirit is favourable to Tyranny, will be found, on examination, to be equally falſe and frivolous. An early opinion had prevailed among the firſt converts, that Chriſtianity and Slavery were really inconſiſtent, and that ſubjection to God under the goſpel was attended with all the effects of manumiſſion from the dominion of man. This we learn from the writings of St. Paul, where we find him frequently confuting ſo dangerous

* Iſaiah lx. 21. 18.

gerous an error, and inſiſting, with great variety and ſtrength of argument, that the religion of Chriſt made not the leaſt alteration in our civil duties. But long before the promulgation of the goſpel, reaſon had condemned the inſtitution of ſlavery as unjuſt, and nature and humanity had warmly proteſted againſt its continuance. It had been found by experience to be pernicious both to the maſter and the ſlave: In the former, it foſtered and encouraged a ſpirit of cruelty, inſolence and luſt, which led on to the neglect of all the duties of morality; in the latter, it debaſed and diſpirited the mind, and extinguiſhed every generous ſentiment of virtuous praiſe and emulation; ſo as to confirm but too truly the aphoriſm of the poet, "That the "day, which takes from a man his liberty, takes from him "half his virtue." The mild and gentle temper of the Goſpel concurred with theſe ſoft ſuggeſtions of Reaſon. It repreſented all men as the offspring of the ſame God, redeemed by the ſame Saviour, and fellow-heirs with him of the ſame heavenly inheritance. Such doctrines ſet human nature in a new point of view; they gave a worth and dignity to it, which were unknown before; and the more they came to be ſtudied and underſtood, with the greater zeal did they inſpire the Chriſtian Patriot to reſcue mankind from the diſhonours of that ſervile ſtate, under which

ſo large a proportion of the ſpecies groaned. Accordingly it happened in fact, that as Chriſtianity prevailed, and men grew better acquainted with the equality of their condition, the practice of ſlavery declined; the yoke of bondage, which, to the opprobrium of humanity, had for ſo many ages galled the necks of our fellow-creatures and reduced them to a level with the brutes, was lightened, and at length removed: In ſpite of the influence of climates, the extent of empire, and the barbarous and ſavage manners of antiquity, wherever the glad tidings of this religion came, Servitude and Tyranny fled before it, Liberty with its train of ſocial and domeſtic virtues attended and followed after it: and "while it ſeemed to have no other object but the feli-"city of another life, it provided in the moſt effectual "manner for our happineſs and ſecurity in this."‡

NOR is the genius of the Goſpel leſs friendly to Religious than it is to Civil Liberty. For as in phyſical movements, the actions of bodies on each other are always mutual, in like manner with regard to theſe two capital gifts of providence, they are in their natures ſo connected, that neither can ſubſiſt in any tolerable degree of perfection, without the concomitant bleſſings of the other. The ſame love of

‡ *Monteſquieu.*

of freedom and averſion to conſtraint, which encourages the mind to aſſert its civil rights, will lead by neceſſary conſequence to the vindication of its religious liberties: and the ſame ſpirit of independence, which teaches us to oppoſe the uſurpations of authority upon conſcience, will incite us in its turn to refuſe ſubmiſſion to the commands of a tyrant and a deſpot. Here alſo matter of fact confirms this reaſoning. In thoſe ſtates, where Chriſtianity is profeſſed and practiced in its purity, there alſo political freedom flouriſhes in its vigour; whilſt the countries, which are ſtill in bondage to the terrors of ſuperſtition, at the ſame time groan under the iron hand of civil oppreſſion. Again the ſame cauſes which have concurred to introduce a reformation in government, have never failed, ſooner or later, to occaſion a ſimilar reformation in religion; and the ſame train of events, which has brought on the ruin of the one, has proved in the end to be equally fatal and deſtructive to the other.

BUT as the beſt things when corrupted become the worſt, ſo Liberty, the choiceſt of earthly bleſſings, whether we conſider it as regarding our Religious or our Civil Privileges, is liable to abuſe; and when abuſed, is capable of being converted into the greateſt curſe. On this account the

the Apoſtle, after having aſſerted in the text, that we *have been called unto liberty* by the goſpel, providently adds the following caution, *only uſe not liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh, but by love ſerve one another.* It was to the neglect of this ſalutary counſel, that the event, the conſequences of which we are met this day to deprecate, was chiefly owing. It was not that temperate and ſober love of liberty, with which the citizens of a free ſtate can never be too much inſpired; but it was liberty inflamed and blown up into licentiouſneſs, which is incompatible with the peace and order of any community, to which we are to impute that long train of evils, which did not end but with the ruin of our Conſtitution in church and ſtate. It is not denied by the warmeſt friends of the unhappy monarch, whoſe fortunes we now deplore, that his firſt acts of government tended too ſtrongly towards arbitrary power. From the example of his father, and from the precedents of former reigns, he had been taught to entertain the moſt lofty ideas of his own authority; whilſt in the mean time the popular current had begun to run with violence on the ſide of liberty, which had been not a little ſwelled and increaſed by that wealth and property, which the pacific reign of his predeceſſor had poured in upon the people. In this ſituation, in which he was placed as on an iſthmus, be-

tween the claims of prerogative on one ſide, and the demands of liberty on the other, he found thoſe elevated notions of monarchy, with which he had been imbued from infancy, contradicted by the general temper and diſpoſition of his kingdom; and it was not either with the beſt grace or the beſt faith, that he was obliged to recede from thoſe intemperate acts of power he had at firſt exerted. But recede, though with reluctance, he did; and ſuch conceſſions in favour of the ſubject were obtained, and in a regular and parliamentary way, as, in the opinion of moderate men, were an ample ſecurity againſt future invaſions. But the moderate men of thoſe times were few: the circumſtances of the King were nice and critical: and it required more management, than his capacity ſeems to have been equal to, to extricate himſelf with honour from the dangers which ſurrounded him. New occaſions of complaint were given, and new ſecurities were required, more unconſtitutional, than the errors they were intended to prevent: till at laſt, as the ſpirit of faction mounted higher, petitions were changed into commands; and the redreſs of grievances was proſecuted with the ſame inſolence, that the centurion aſked the Conſulſhip for Octavius, when he enforced his requeſt to the Roman Senate by laying his hand on his ſword. So fatal were the diſorders into

which

which men were thrown by an exceſs of fondneſs for what is good; as if extreme liberty had not its inconveniencies, as well as extreme ſervitude; and in this, as in other bleſſings, human nature were beſt accommodated with a mean.

BUT the abuſes of Civil Liberty were not the only cauſes, which at that time deſolated this unhappy nation; other evils were not wanting, which aroſe from the abuſes of Religion. Inſtead of that decency and ſimplicity of worſhip, preſcribed by the Eſtabliſhment, ſo ſuitable to the nature of God, ſo fitted to the infirmity of man; a ſpecies of devotion was ſet on foot, which was entirely mental, which rejected all rites and ceremonies as the *weak and beggarly elements* of the carnal man, unworthy of the ſpirituality of the goſpel, and, like the armour of Saul to David, rather cumberſom than uſeful to the experienced ſoldier of Chriſt. According to this new ſyſtem, Chriſtianity was conſidered, as indeed a leading character * in the hiſtory of thoſe times, who ought to have been better informed, was pleaſed to call it, *a divine philoſophy in the mind*; averſe to all exterior obſervances, and utterly abhorrent from that form of diſcipline, which was practiſed in the *ſhops* and *ſteeple houſes* of the church of England. This ſour and unſocial ſpirit of In-

* *Algernon Sidney.*

Independence in matters of Religion begat a ſimilar ſpirit of Independence in matters of Government; and from the mixture of both was ſpawned a filthy brood of Enthuſiaſts, who under the cloak of conſcience and of *ſeeking the Lord*, as the cant was, committed the moſt unjuſtifiable injuries to man; who not content to aim at the abolition of order and ſubordination in the Church, carried along with them the ſame levelling principle into the State, reſolving, the more effectually to erect the Monarchy of Jeſus, firſt of all to overturn the Monarchy of Charles. The event of this religious frenzy we all know, and our anceſtors ſeverely felt: the murder of the King was but a prelude to the more diſmal tragedy that followed; the Conſtitution fell together with him; and it was the work of years, before another could be raiſed from its ruins.

THE account of Civil and Religious Liberty, and the abuſes of both, which hath now been given, will lead to ſeveral reflections, which we may apply to ourſelves.

IT will teach us to reverence that Conſtitution, which, amidſt all the ſhocks and colliſions of contending parties, is yet preſerved to us, and of which Liberty is the ſpring and principle that actuates the whole, as the moſt invaluable

able of bleſſings; and to acquieſce in the general plan of it, as ſacred and inviolable, which, though not abſolutely perfect, is, perhaps, poſſeſſed of as much perfection as the times will bear. The wiſdom, which we have bought by the experience of paſt evils, has advanced our political ſyſtem to a degree of improvement, which former ages durſt hardly hope for. The ſpirit of liberty has purged itſelf from thoſe impurities of fanaticiſm and ſuperſtition, which were blended with it in its ſource; and has been taught to run with a clear and equal ſtream, enriching the country through which it flows, and reflecting the faireſt images of wealth and commerce, of public and private ſecurity, which are fed and nouriſhed on its boſom. Such advantages were not purchaſed but at the expence of many a generous ſtruggle of our forefathers; and, by the providence of God educing good from ill, was one conſequence of thoſe times of rebuke and blaſphemy which are now over, never, we hope, to return more. We have nothing to apprehend from that amiable and illuſtrious Prince, under whoſe mild and equal adminiſtration we now live; we have every aſſurance we can wiſh, that our privileges are ſafe in His hands; the danger, if there be any, is from our ſelves; leſt our love of liberty degenerate into licentiouſneſs, and our pri-

vate

vate vices and party quarrels defeat His endeavours, and counteract His deſigns for the public welfare.

FROM hence too we may learn to guard againſt indulging a ſpirit of Refinement in matters whether of Religion or Government: amendments, no doubt, are wanted and wiſhed in both; but before they be attempted, it becomes us to be well aſſured, they will be ſanctified by the ſucceſs; leſt in our zeal for imaginary improvements we part with real bleſſings, and through an intemperate fondneſs of correcting parts, we riſk the ſafety and preſervation of the whole. It is poſſible the grievances we complain of may be imaginary; or they may be attended with advantages, which more than compenſate for any ſeeming inconvenience; or they cannot be remedied without danger; or if removed, worſe evils may ſucceed in their place. The faults, wherever they lie, are ſomewhere elſe than in the form and principles of our Conſtitution; and the reformation, for which ſome amongſt us are ſo clamorous, may on enquiry be found to be only wanting in themſelves.

LASTLY, the conſideration of that high degree of civil and religious liberty, which is ſecured to us by the laws, ſhould

ſhould teach us to transfer the ſame notion of liberty into our own conduct; to cultivate in ourſelves that Moral Freedom, which is the greateſt dignity of the human nature, and the neglect of which is equally fatal to individuals and to communities. This is the only method, by which we can reflect a luſtre on thoſe ſignal advantages we enjoy above the nations all around us: by this alone we may ſecure the continuance of them to ourſelves; and, what will always be the wiſh of the true patriot, by this we ſhall be able to tranſmit them unimpaired to our poſterity.

THE END.